

meeting the same problem by producing three lists themselves; one each for law reports, statutes and journals.

Computer-assisted legal research, giving on-line access to the full text of legislation and law reports, is already a commercial reality in a number of countries and holds much promise for the not-too-distant future, with the prospect of really up-to-date information and vastly improved literature-searching techniques. However, there are, at present, severe financial constraints on the provision of such services to small jurisdictions, such as New Zealand and the Australian states, where lawyers are relatively few and physically scattered. There may, though, be a place for small systems devoted to local materials, especially heavily used recent court-decisions in subjects where the law is changing rapidly, such as town-planning law or matrimonial property. Work is being done in New Zealand on such systems, largely on the initiative of lawyers and law-firm librarians.

It is quite possible that, in the medium term, many of the present deficiencies of all types of law library will be overcome by the use of computers and telecommunications systems. But the market for monographs and journals is likely to be around for some time yet and the strengths and weaknesses will continue to be measured in numbers of volumes and titles for the foreseeable future.

Reference:

1. Stuart Perry, 'New Zealand law libraries', *New Zealand Libraries*, v.29, no.10 (Nov. 1966), p.189-94.

Acknowledgements

The author is most grateful to all those law librarians who responded to his requests for information, and requests that any complaints of distortion or omission should be directed to him.

Bridging the gap

JAN BIERMAN

Branch Librarian, Mangere Bridge Library.

CHRIS OFFICER

*formerly Second-In-Charge, Mangere Bridge Library,
now City Librarian, Whangarei.*

SALLY PATRICK

Assistant Children's Librarian, Manukau Public Libraries.

An exciting challenge for any librarian is the setting up of a new library. An additional bonus is if the library is in an area that had previously been without a library service or any co-ordinated community facilities. On 2 July 1979 the newest of the Manukau Public Libraries' branches opened its doors to Mangere Bridge's eager residents.

Mangere Bridge

Mangere Bridge, a former market gardening area and now a well established Auckland suburb, is on the main arterial route from the city to the international airport. It is separated from the rest of Mangere by the Mangere mountain reserve and quarry, surrounded on all other sides by the Manukau Harbour. Within this naturally defined area there are approximately 2,000 households, a shopping centre of 37 businesses, and a light industrial area of 11 industries. Although the population is predominantly pakeha, there is a large Chinese community and smaller Pacific Island and Maori communities. There is a marae in the area and an early-nineteenth-century stone church with a Maori burial ground.

The geographical limitations, combined with the older-established nature of the area and the village-like atmosphere, have promoted a strong community spirit. Prior to the setting up of this branch, the nearest library facilities were some four kilometres away, in another borough. The building of the Mangere Bridge branch was greeted with great enthusiasm by the residents, who, in preparation for the opening, had can-

celled their subscriptions with other libraries, regularly communicated with the Council, and generally harassed the builders with their endless questions.

The library

The library is sited behind the shopping centre, in Swanson Park. It is a new building, simple in design and resembles a large (280 square metres) brick-and-tile home. The area has been well landscaped with the recent addition of park benches. The interior of the library is bright and attractive. Bold colours, prints, posters, pot plants, artwork and displays create a friendly informal atmosphere. Approximately one third of the floor space is devoted to a self-contained children's area.

The present stock level is approximately 20,000 titles, of which approximately one third is junior stock. As of April 1980 there were 2,500 adult and 1,700 junior enrolments. However, a large number of people who use the library are enrolled at other Manukau branches and it is not possible to estimate the user level with any accuracy at this time. A 'library use' questionnaire-type survey is planned for the area and this should provide useful information on library use by the community. In conjunction with the other Manukau branches, this branch operates a Plessey computerised issue-system. This provides for a fast issue-system which, with a projected annual issue of 270,000 and a small staff of seven full-timers and two part-timers operating the branch 55 hours per week, eliminates as much as possible long queues and delays at the issue counter. Somewhat of a blessing on a chaotic Saturday morning in such a small building! The system also provides very detailed and accurate figures on the whole range of library activities which can be of great assistance to those thus inclined.

Plans and problems

From the outset we planned to create a library that was explicitly people-orientated. We consciously questioned every aspect of routine and design to bring about, first and foremost, an atmosphere that people were welcome here and that the housing and managing of the collection was secondary to this. It has not always been easy — some of the time you can do without some of the people and some of the things they bring with them — but, although it has at times required much



debate and painful self-criticism, it has had very satisfying results.

The first major problem we struck was the lack of space in our brand new building. It was quite apparent that we were just not going to get that many stacks and that amount of furniture into that much space. Turning the stacks on an angle, herring-bone fashion, not only provided us with the space for those extra tables and lounge areas, but opened the stacks up in a way which displays the first bay of each stack and invites the customer to browse. The result was both functional and pleasing to the eye. The junior area provided us with a more complex problem. We finally compromised by creating somewhat of a barrier to access in favour of retaining as large a flexible open area as was possible, both for normal library use and for occasions such as class visits.

Although for some years Manukau has offered a totally free library service, the concept of a 'rental' collection has been retained. As a result the 'spotted' books have traditionally been housed in separate collections. As well, it has been the practice to maintain a separate 'New Zealand' collection. We felt that the very separateness of these collections hindered rather than facilitated access. From the outset, then, we reduced our collections to fiction and non-fiction, adult and junior. The straight alphabetical sequence in the adult fiction tended to upset some of the old-timers used to other libraries — 'That's not the way they do it at —'. However, it seems it is just a matter of learning and our moves in this area went unnoticed by most. We feel that there have been positive benefits in terms of access and it is certainly easier to manage. The 'rental' books are still spotted and New Zealand material is indicated, thus effectively creating sub-collections within one collection.

We also felt that it was important that the library appear attractive to our prospective customers; that it was not sufficient

to just 'be' a library, but we must create a place that people wanted to come to. We were lucky — a new building and almost completely new stock. It is not hard to sell people new books, for free! The top of the low reference stand in the front of the adult non-fiction quickly became the 'new books' display. It's like selling candy at check-out counters — people will often take one just because they happen to see it on their way out.

Hand-in-hand with the quality of the stock went our determination to maintain a display programme. An attractive display board runs the entire length of one wall and was soon ablaze with everything from the latest pin-ups of rock stars to community notices. After we had mastered the intricacies of our bright red hexagonal display stand, the product of a somewhat devious Swiss mind, it has been constantly used. In the junior area we have utilised every bit of free wallspace to create an atmosphere as alive and exciting as resources permit.





Promotion

The computerised issue-system presents some delays in processing memberships. We were determined to overcome these routine-induced obstacles from the very beginning and decided that our customers should be able to enjoy the privileges of their plastic-laminated Plessey-labelled membership cards from the day we opened. In the worst of winter weather we spent a week at a table in the shopping centre, signing up all and sundry, pressuring and cajoling with the enticement of 'their very own brand new free library'. Again we felt the need to sell our services to prospective customers and we undertook a poster and visiting campaign, and circularised (using a local school PTA) every household in the area. Promotion has played a large part in all our activities. Although we have no sure proof that our promotional efforts are in any way effective, we have come to regard it as a matter of duty to let the people know what we are doing, rather than just leaving it up to the interested to find out. Without this constant outward-looking perspective, our activities would be little more than self-gratifying job-creation.

There are three primary schools in the area. Some weeks before the library opened the Manukau City Children's Librarian accompanied by the Assistant Children's Librarian visited each school, firstly to outline the library's services to teachers, then to talk to the children, class by class. These class visits initiated the terrific response we were to receive from children once the library opened. We wanted to promote the library through entertaining rather than by traditional means: to provide a picture of a library as something other than just a 'building with books in it'. So we shocked the children, made them laugh, and rid them for ever of library stereotypes. Many



a green-faced teacher was seen to disappear after being introduced to *Fungus the Bogeyman*. The response was immediate and overwhelming. Each afternoon the library was flooded with children, wanting to request the books they had heard about at school, watch the computer in action, fiddle with the microfiche, and pester the staff endlessly for jigsaws and games. We instigated a follow-up programme of class visits to the library, and this continues.

Achievements

Once the doors were opened and David Lange had duly planted his tree, we could get down to the business of running what we have come to see as the Mangere Bridge 'community centre'. It has required total staff involvement and has required effort beyond that called for by the normal library ex-

pectations. Our programme has largely developed through the willingness of all concerned to entertain ideas and seek out ways to make even the most outlandish idea a reality. Take the Halloween Riot and the Great Pumpkin, for example. To quote the monthly report:

A Halloween Party was planned for November 2nd. . . An open invitation was extended to the children at the three primary schools in the area. . . We naively predicted the attendance of approximately 100 children, which we felt was within the controlling capabilities of the 10 staff members. . . As it turned out, at 7.30 we had nearer 400 children. . . who seemed hell-bent on entertaining themselves. . . We had to forego any organised form of entertainment inside the library and move outside into Swanson Park to gain control. . . the party was an overwhelming — even riotous — success, having caught the imagination of the Mangere Bridge community.

The Great Pumpkin, an orange and green paper construction, took two staff members a week to build and stood eight feet tall in his green stockinged feet. It survived about an hour before being torn into a thousand tiny pieces, with the hapless occupant barely escaping with his life.

And so it goes. Even the most insane of ideas became a reality. We use people's ideas for the running of an effective 'people place'. One staff member watching two kids kicking a ball in the park suggested we should keep balls here — and so we have two well-used soccer balls and just lately have added two frisbees. The library has grown to include the park. A customer said it would be nice to have carol-singing in the park at Christmas — and we ended up with a Salvation Army band playing to the assembled multitudes. Someone else was in-

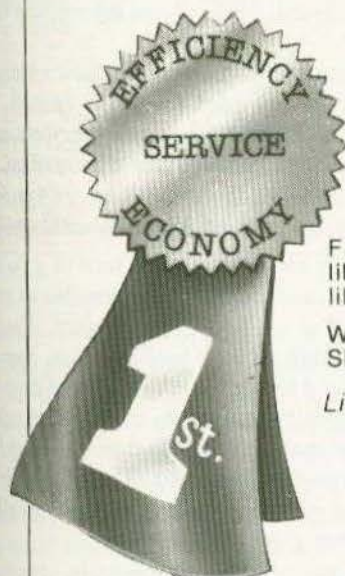
terested in natural living — we had lectures once a week for six weeks by suitably qualified guest-speakers on the various aspects of the subject. Another customer suggested we have a soiree. A local school had a mock road accident — the classes involved produced a display that covered the entire display wall and gave their parents a chance to see what they had done. And so it goes on: Christmas-cake icing demonstration, herb evening, Father Christmas, gift collection for underprivileged kids, planting a spring garden, New Zealand rally champ on motor sports, a library pet, puppet shows, pet parade, drawing competition, origami demonstration, stamp collecting, martial arts, regular children's holiday programmes, a monthly library newsletter of local and library information — a never-ending stream of ideas just waiting for a chance to become something.

And it doesn't cost much. We ran the Halloween party on \$30.00. Apart from coloured cards, paints, pens and other bits and pieces, and with a bit of help from petty cash, we get along on the inventiveness of our human resources. It's the people that do it — have the ideas, make them work, and enjoy them, learn from them, grow with them.

And . . .

We do enjoy it. The success of Mangere Bridge library has been largely dependent on the success of its community-activities programme. This programme is now an integral part of the library. The future? Well, more of the same — the beginning of a community awareness programme with speakers on drug and alcohol abuse, a frisbee demonstration in the park, a giant cake to celebrate our first birthday. And, by this time you are probably wondering when we issue our 270,000 books.

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